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ABSTRACT

The attitudes of today's West German women about family, profession, and society are framed in recent history, most of it negative to women. A survey of 538 West German women of different age groups conducted in 1985-86 showed that women thought it necessary that all women get vocational training. However, only 63 percent felt that a woman should take a job if she does not need to earn money. Possibly because of school schedules that send children home for a 2-hour lunch, 58 percent of the women think that mothers with small children must give up their jobs. More than half wished for equal part-time jobs for fathers and mothers. Three-fourths of the women believed that women did not get as good positions as men did because they did not like and did not use male behavior, whereas about half also saw the reason for women attaining lesser jobs as the handicapping condition of caring for children. Among the young women, many said they would not have children so that they could continue their careers, and many would not marry either, since they would not need a husband for economic support. A similar questionnaire completed by 529 young West German men in 1987 and 1988 showed that most would not take part-time work to help care for children; 59 percent were in favor of marriage. Finally, 76 percent of the young men said that women should give up their jobs when they have children. (KC)

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My theme is:

Female and Male Attitudes to Profession, Family and Partnership.
Results of 4 Opinion Questionings in West Germany

In order to understand the attitudes of German women to family, profession and society today we must know something about the social position of German women in recent history.

The rule of Hitler 1933 - 45 has had deep negative effects on the emancipation of women in Germany. In Hitler's opinion the emancipation of women was an invention of the jewish mind and he tried to stop and force back the positive development towards equal rights for women which had begun during the Weimar Republic.

Already in the first year of Hitler's rule all existing feminist unions were dissolved and prohibited because they renounced to get incorporated into the new Nazi-Organisation "Deutsche Frauenfront" under the dominant influence of the "NS-Frauenschaft".

So the German women had no independent organisation any more and no leaders coming out of free elections.

In 1934 Hitler's minister of propaganda Joseph Goebbels, defined the role of women like this: "The nature of the Nazi movement is masculin. If we exclude women from public life we do this not because we want to get rid of them but in order to give their real honor back to them. The highest and most distinguished mission of a woman is still to be wife and motrer."

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As a consequence of this ideology all married women in Germany were pressurized to give up their jobs.

It started with a public campaign which urged married women to give up their jobs and positions outside of their family in order to guarantee the full employment of all men and to put an end to double wage earning families. The motto was: Women must learn to manage with the income of their husbands.

In 1933 all married women in civil service were dismissed. And since 1935 it was generally forbidden for women to carry out jobs like physician, dentist, lawyer and judge.

If a married woman still worked in a job her salary had to be not higher than two thirds of the salary a man would get for the same job.

In 1939 there came out a decree that the quote of female students in Higher Education should not be more than 10% of the male students.

A woman should not have any right to co-determination in public, political cultural, economic affairs. She was confined to the realm of a housewife. She was placed under legal disability in this masculin fashist regime.

If a woman wanted social influence and a social rise she must go into a Nazi woman's organisation, the so called "Deutsche Frauenschaft" or the "Deutsches Frauenwerk". Only thrcugh these organisations she could make a social carreer - but mostly in an honorary capacity or as a bad paid leader of other women in political, social and welfare organisations.

Till 1941 every fifth woman had become a formal member of this Nazi-Women's Association. But the many leaders in these women's

organisations were dynamic, disciplined, efficient and self confident. They did not at all fit into the Nazi housewife and

mother ideology. And they caused some problems for the Nazi machos who finally found a weak compromise formula which read like this: "We accept this formation and official incorporation of women for our nations sake - in so far as they do not devote themselves to their first service in marriage, motherhood and family."

But when the war came in 1939 the Nazi government needed the women as substituters for men in the labor market. The men had to become soldiers and the women had to take over their jobs in factories and service institutions - in spite of the official ideology.

And even if more and more women took over the jobs of men and even if they did hard work in a 60 hours working week they were as long as possible confined to inferior positions. The Nazis preferred to reactivate retired male seniors for responsible positions and only if there was no other choice they agreed to a higher social position for a woman.

At the end of World War II (two) 4 million German men were dead and some more millions were prisoners of war. So in this time of extreme need when there was no housing, no energy, no supply in a vastly destroyed country the German women again had to organise the survival of their families. Their will to survive and their energy to rebuild their next living world was impressive - also for the few men who had survived.

Many of those women were widows and they had to provide for their children by earning money in a job. But those women whose

husbands came home again had to go back to their duties in household and family - and most of them accepted their old subordinate position again chiefly because they had no other choice:

There was a large lack of men in West Germany after the war.

Most of the desired former soldiers were still determined by the old Macho attitude. An inobedient wife could easily be substituted. So these women had to retire again to their subordinate position if they did not want to endanger their marriage.

A divorce was always a losing bargain for a woman, they were always disadvantaged:

- Divorced women had a bad social prestige
- They seldom had a job which brought enough money to be economically independent
- and they could not get a newer or better job to earn their living.

So most of them could not afford to risk their marriage.

It lasted to the end of the sixties till the situation began to change. And it was a long and hard way for German women.

We should have in mind this historical background if we now regard the results of the opinion polls which we did in West Germany in the eighties:

In 1985/86 we handed out questionnaires to German women of different age groups who attended different adult education courses and women's groups in the surroundings of my hometown Tübingen in South-West-Germany. I got back 538 questionaires - 327 from women in public adult education courses and 177 from

women in other groups.

49% of these women were employed in an outdoor job.

It is interesting that all the women who answered the questionnaires considered it necessary that every woman gets a vocational training today. But only 63% of them said a woman should also take a job if she does not need to earn money.

37% seem to be uncertain whether they should work if they would have a husband or a partner who earns a good salary.

42% would in this situation have a bad conscience if they would take a job away from a family father and 45% would have a bad conscience in relation to unemployed single mothers.

That means that quite a lot of German women still accept the role of hidden reserves in the labor market - if they do not economically need to work.

This might still be a lasting effect of the historical role of German women arround World War II (two).

And this might also explain why 27% of the inquired women took over unpaid honorary activities.

Of course there are also the special difficulties which prevent mothers with smaller children who are willing to work from taking over a job:

In the Federal Republic of Germany we have still the situation that the Kindergardens close from noon to 2 p.m. So at 12 o'clock the children stand on the street and must be picked up.

But a fully employed woman normally is not free at this time. She cannot care for children and their lunch.

This means that working mothers would need another person who

cares for the children at noon.

So it is not surprising if 58% of the women think that mothers with small children must give up their job. 53% plead for an equal time sharing with part-time jobs for father and mother in order to make it possible for women during a family period (with small children) to be employed in an outdoor job.

The situation will not be better when the children go to school: In our country we have only very few whole-day schools. Most of the school children also come home at noon.

But even if one of the working mothers with a part-time job should succeed in managing this problem she probably will not have a fair chance to work her way up to a professional career. The daily practice shows that part-time workers very seldom can climb up the professional ladder. This might be one of the reasons why most men are not willing to take a part-time job.

In our questioning the women gave several reasons why they have so very rare chances to get a leading position:

74% believe it is because women do not like and do not use the necessary male behavior.

63% think that women normally did not get the same vocational training standard as men.

48% see the main reason in the handicapped situation of mothers who have to care for children.

47% just believe that our society is not willing to give women a chance to socially climb up.

47% clearly said: Men restrain their wives from a professional career.

But on the other hand 53% of the women see a main reason also in

- Women with children will have no professional chances (53% of the younger compared to 47% of the older women)
- Our society does not like women climbing up social or professional ladders (57% against 47% of the older women)

The younger women do not as largely agree to the statement that women normally do not get the same vocational training than the older women (the relation is 37% to 53%)

It seems to be clear that the younger women who have a better vocational training also do not need marriage as often for their economic maintenance as older women..

There are also significant differences in the estimation of female competences and qualifications for a successful professional career:

the fact that women often think that they have more important things to do than to make brilliant careers.

We did a second inquiry almost at the same time with 600 female pupils from secondary schools (age between 16 and 22). All 600 questionaires given out in classes came back. And we compared the results to the results from the first inquiry with older women.

The most spectacular differences concern the attitudes towards marriage:

Only 28% of the late teenagers and early twens mean that women should marry - in comparison to 56% of the elder women.

There is certainly a connection with the higher percentage of affirmative answers of the younger women to questions like:

- Women will be restrained by their husbands (64% compared to 47% of the older women)

Only 9% of the younger women - compared to 34% of the older women - think that women are less self confident than men. And only 6 % of the younger against 31% of the older women think women are less ambitious than men.

We see here a clear trend:

Younger women in West Germany to a significant higher degree than older women consider women as ambitious and self confident and men as obstructionists for female career. As they give high priority to their professional activities they consequently do not want so much to get married as older women who are more uncertain about their priorities.

44% of the younger women draw the conclusion that it is not essential for them to have children. Only 37% consider children as important for them.

No miracle that West Germany has now the lowest birth rate in the world.

As this seemed to be an important point we at once started a follow up inquiry with 548 other female pupils (same age group). We asked them why young women could think to have children is not essential for them.

- 60% considered the high divorce rates as a reason because they think children are always suffering from a divorce of their parents and women will mostly have to care alone for children after a divorce which will even more handicap them in their professional career.
- 52% of the girls were in this context of the opinion that single mothers get not enough help in our society (no whole-day kindergardens and schools etc.)

- 44% think it is incompatible in our society to have small children and at the same time have an outdoor job and that to have children consequently means to give up the job.
- 39% assume that after such a break in the professional employment of mothers it will not be possible again to make a good professional career.

On the other hand the German girls have a better opinion of German men than older women. 75% of them think that women could rely now on their male partners even helping with child care. But even if German men seem to get better - the main burden with children will always be on women'shoulders.

And there are still other reasons why German girls and young women do not want to get children:

59% think it irresponsible to deliver children into a world under atomic threat and rapidly growing environmental contamination. (These answers were given a short time before the atomic accident of Tschernobyl happened and before Michael Gorbatschow started his campaign towards atomic disarmement.)

After these 3 inquiries with women we started an opinion questioning with 529 men in 1987 and 1988.

91,5% of these men were between 16 an 25 years old. They were pupils, students, workers, employees, soldiers and members of the alternative national service (Zivildienstleistende).

Here are some of their opinions:

59 % consider marriage as the adequate form of a consistent partnership between man and woman.

If we compare: 56% of the older women but only 28% of the younger

women shared this estimation of marriage.

We than especially compared the opinion of the 276 male pupils from our fourth inquiry to the opinion of the female pupils of our second inquiry:

58% of the male and only 28% of the female pupils are in favour of marriage.

Young women seem to have realized that a marriage is a heavier burden for them than for their male partners.

They might still fear the double burden: To do the cleaning, cooking, washing, ironing etc. for 2 persons. But as they have more confidence in their male partners that they would more and more share this burden there are two other heavy reasons: First of all they fear to be professionaly handicapped by children and secondly they have a general distrust towards a sound and healthy future of children in this endangered world.

We asked the young men about their view of the role of women in a consistent partnership. 14% of the men who had answered our questionaires still prefer a female partner who keeps them free from all household obligations. But the last majority (more than 80%) of those young German men plead for an equal partnership between men and women.

These young men also see the typical problems of women: the difficulty to come along with jobwork and children.

76% draw the conclusion that a woman should give up her job if she gets a child.

If we compare again the opinions of the male and the female pupils: 68% of the young men and 65% of the young women see no escape from this consequence: Young women have to decide between children and job.

The young men show understanding for this situation of women and 39% of them think it would be fair that if they have children together man and woman should both try to get part-time jobs and equally share the carry for household and children in the free part of their day.

But 54% of the young men are not in favor of this construction

The percentage of the women who plead for part-time jobs for men is much higher than the 39% of men: 67% of the younger and 53% of the older women wish men to equally share job-work as well as household- and family-work.

83% of the young men are generally willing to cooperate in household and family but they are not ready to give up their full time jobs.

11% of the young men think men should for some time give up their jobs and do the family work if their wives earn more money in their jobs.

Another interesting question: The young men were asked: Would you accept a woman as your boss in your job-work?

79% of the men felt they would accept a female boss.

17% would not accept her.

But when we had asked the older women in the first inquiry about their attitude towards female boss - only 13% of them said they would prefer a female boss, 27% of the women were shure that men

are better bosses.

We asked the men about their opinion on the obligatory character of a consistant intimate relation between man and woman:

16% of the men think that they could have also other intimate partners if they are married,

9% think married women should have the same right.

71% of tne men think that married partners should openly inform one another about other intimate partners.

In non marital consistent partnerships:

27% of the men pleaded for other intimate female partners,

21% of them thought also women could have other intimate male partners,

69% of the men say partners should inform one another about other intimate contacts also in non-marital partnerships.

It is interesting that those 17% of the men who do not accept a female boss seem to be typical machos - also in this other respect:

30% of them think that men could have other intimate partners if they are married but only 2% of them give the same right to married women.

In non marital partnership even 45% of those men think the male partner could have other intimate relations but only 17% would concede this also to women.

I hope that American men would not refuse a female boss etc.

To sum up it can be said:

German women are getting progressively emancipated, they are at the point where they gradually overcome their historical burdens. Young German women of the eighties seem not to be very keen on marrying and on having children.

Young German women like to have a job and they like to make professional careers.

But they know that it is very difficult to have both under the current social and institutional conditions in West Germany.

So most of them seem to give priority to professional work and career and they have a tendency to rather go without having children and partly even without marrying.

Many German women feel to be handicapped by their husbands.

Many young men in West Germany try to see their wives as equal partners and they are also willing to help with household and family work but most of them are not willing to equally share job work and family work.

Too many of these young German men still have ideas and habits which are not accepted any longer by young German women.

These are the main problematic and controversial points:

- Women should give up their jobs if they get a child.
- Many men are not willing to take part-time jobs.
- Most men are not willing to be housemen for some time.
- Some men refuse a woman as their boss.
- Too many men still have a double standard of morals.

We should develop better social conditions and new forms of conviviality and of practical cooperation which enable women to have children as well as a professional career and which force men to take more full responsibilities for their family and their children.

We are on the way.....

There are also some questions about AIDS in the questionnaires for men:

96% of those men know AIDS.

73% of them think they are well informed about AIDS.

24% think they are not well informed.

40% fear AIDS.

57% say they do not fear AIDS.

77% think one could easily get AIDS from unknown intimate partners.

17% are careless about this danger.